

that it is time to decide this, Mr. Ickes wants a decision, Mr. Ickes expects a decision. That was not based on any communication about this matter that I had had with Mr. Ickes.<sup>657</sup>

Babbitt's response to Lieberman ignored the fact that McCain's July 19, 1996, letter specifically asked Babbitt about the truth of Eckstein's assertion concerning the content of Babbitt's statements to Eckstein. Lieberman then followed-up on his own question:

Sen. Lieberman: OK. So what you are saying is that your statement to Senator McCain, although it looks like it goes to a total denial of Mr. Eckstein's recollection that you even mentioned Mr. Ickes, you are saying now that your statement to Senator McCain was no, that you, in fact, had not talked to —

Secretary Babbitt: I think Senator McCain was asking in that letter —

Sen. Lieberman: [continuing] Mr. Ickes. Yes.

Secretary Babbitt: [continuing] Was there a communication between you and Mr. Ickes, and my response was, unequivocally, no, there was not.<sup>658</sup>

In his Senate testimony, Babbitt repeated the phrasing of the denial set forth in his Aug. 30, 1996, letter concerning his use of the word "instructed" during his conversation with Eckstein:

Sen. Susan Collins: . . .What part isn't true? The "without delay" part?  
(R-Maine)

Secretary Babbitt: I did not tell Mr. Eckstein that Mr. Ickes had instructed me to make a decision.<sup>659</sup>

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<sup>657</sup>*Id.* at 263-64.

<sup>658</sup>*Id.* at 264.

<sup>659</sup>*Id.* at 267.